

ASSOCIATION ~ ITS A LIE! ~

WELFARE DIRECTOR SAYS FARM WORKERS AVERAGE \$2. PER HOUR

Sept. 5--Harold B. Kehoe, director of welfare for Alameda County stated today in the S.F. Examiner that unskilled fruit pickers make an average of \$2.00 per hour. He said that welfare recipients were too lazy to take these jobs.

Here is a breakdown of wages earned this season by our own crews, working in fruit crops out of Alameda County:

PEARS.....Maximum wages \$1.25 per hour.

PRUNES.....Best unskilled picker: \$5.00
for a full day's work.

APRICOTS.....\$1.60 per hour for the best wage
earned by an average picker.

BUSHBERRIES.....\$1.00 per hour maximum.

Welfare "green carders" who have been forced to join our crews have in some instances put in a full day's work and ended up with as little as \$3.00. A full day, as our members well know, starts as early as 3:30 a.m. and runs usually until 7:00 p.m.

People in responsible positions have no right to make irresponsible public statements. Unless Mr. Kehoe is a liar, he'd better inform himself on the actual wages and working conditions of Alameda County farm workers before he makes any more public statements like today's.

AN EDITORIAL: Who we are and why we're here.

The West Oakland Farm Workers Association was originally a Catholic Worker Community Development project. The idea behind it was to provide transportation at cost to the down-and-outers who seek refuge in our city. Its nucleus is the W. Oakland residents who have been forced into farm employment during the past few years.

As a rehabilitation activity we failed. The problems that frustrate the lives of transients and alcoholics are cumulative. They are dissociated from any sense of community and for them cooperation is unreasonable. We found that farm workers and seriously disturbed people don't mix. The interests of people with rent to pay and responsibilities to meet clashed with the interests of unkempt and ill-mannered transients.

From these first attempts the level of our operation became clear. The Association is now an independent community development corporation directing its immediate attention to such grass roots issues as living expenses and earning capacity of our members who are resident farm workers. As a non-profit organization and transportation cooperative, we are gaining support and financial soundness.

Identification with a dynamic group will relieve our members of some of the strain of being unemployed every day at the end of the workday and will give them an occupational relationship to the community. As tangible evidence of his place in the city, each member has an Association ID card. We've got a long way to go, but this is a beginning.

ASSOCIATION NEWS
West Oakland Farm
Workers Association
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J. Bennett Mann,
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UNPAID PRUNE WORKERS PRESSURE SANTA CLARA GROWER;

HEAVY PENALTIES EXPECTED

advice of Atty. Arthur Brunwasser of San Francisco. The grower, Arch Ljepava of Saratoga, has so far refused to make any settlement. It is probable that the labor laws of California will force him to settle for an amount far greater than the actual wages owed.

Here is a recap of the entire situation: On Aug. 29, 25 association members worked all day in Ljepava's orchard. Wages for the full day averaged about \$4.50. The group waited 4 hours after work for the grower's employee to come with their money, finally leaving in despair for Oakland after the employee was located and was found to be without the payroll. Finally the grower himself flatly refused to pay the crew (by telephone), making a vague statement that the matter had already "been taken care of", and trying to deceive us by referring to his employee as a labor contractor. When he was reminded that the workers were still unpaid, he said that "it wasn't his responsibility".

Late the same evening, the association attorney informed the group that California labor law provided penalties which could ultimately result in payment of wages up to thirty times the amount actually earned. The association made a formal demand to the grower by special delivery mail. Meanwhile it became necessary to feed and house about 15 of the workers, since non-payment of the wages had left them destitute. Thus followed the "first annual picnic" of the West Oakland Association.

The following day, August 30, Herb Plough, association member and checker in the prune orchard, went to the grower against the orders of the association. The grower gave him \$130 in cash. He kept this in his pocket for over 24 hours, promised a payoff to several of the workers involved, and then fled with the money and the Association's newly purchased and rebuilt Plymouth Station Wagon.

We contacted our attorney who supported our belief that the grower was still responsible for the wages. The police were notified and the Association contacted the grower by telephone and later by registered mail, informing him that our workers were still unpaid, and that he was acting foolishly and illegally by paying the wages to Plough.

When a settlement is received, it will be in the form of checks payable to the individual worker and distributed through our office or by the Labor Commissioner. We expect the checks to be in amounts much greater than the wages actually earned. If this happens we expect substantial contributions from involved members to the emergency fund, so that we will have the money to deal with similar situations in the future.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

The Association was started in early May with a loan of \$1600. To date \$380 has been repaid. Other expenses have been \$313 for gasoline, \$132 for maintenance, \$96 miscellaneous, \$367 for driver's pay. Total income has been \$1300. Our property consists of a bus and two station wagons. As a business, we have done very badly, with hundreds of hours of labor provided without compensation. We receive no subsidy from any source, other than donated labor and occasional transfusions of cash from the directors' own funds. We hope to radically improve our financial position in the near future, but even as we are operating now, the Association is a going concern financially. The books are available for inspection.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP CARDS WILL BE ISSUED TO CONTRIBUTORS. MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO THE WEST OAKLAND FARM WORKERS ASSOCIATION. WE WILL MAKE A PERSONAL REPORT TO YOU ON HOW YOUR MONEY IS USED.